Homework for Freshman Families
Middle Tennessee State University
Counseling Services

1. Enjoy the time you are able to spend with your soon-to-be new freshman! Plan some special family activities, including a special send-off at the end of the summer. Be sure siblings get a chance for quality time with their big brother/big sister before it’s time to pack up and move.

2. Discuss with your student the following:
   a. Time is the enemy! Your student needs to plan to take 15 credit hours each semester and complete 30 credit hours per year. Students who take fewer credit hours take longer to graduate and a significant majority never graduate. Don’t let this be your student!
   b. Time is money! We expect your student to graduate in 4 years (15 credit hours per semester X 2 semesters (fall/spring) = 30 credit hours X 4 years = 120 credit hours = MTSU GRADUATE!)
   c. Your student needs to see their time at MTSU as their full-time job. The more time physically spent on campus means a stronger connection to the institution and a greater likelihood they will graduate.
   d. Part-time work arrangements, especially the advantages of working on-campus or within Murfreesboro.
   e. A reasonable date for the first visit home.
   f. A back up plan in case of homesickness.
   g. Expectations about practical things like laundry, curfew, and family time when the student does visit at home.
   h. How you will support and inform each other in the event of a family crisis. Expectations regarding communication, including frequency of phone calls to check-in, expectations for communicating travel plans or other major changes to the regular routine.
   i. Financial expectations, including who pays for failed classes or withdrawals. Remember deadlines for dropping classes and potential financial aid reductions associated with dropping classes.
   j. An important phone number for you will be MT One Stop at 898-2111. MT One Stop, located in the Student Services and Admissions Center, is the point of contact for issues related to enrollment, course registration, financial aid, tuition and billing, transcripts, dropping/adding classes, and withdrawal information.

3. Talk with your student about support systems on campus
   a. Prior to departure for campus, make sure you have names and phone numbers for a few of your student’s close friends.
b. Remember that you can contact Housing staff through the front desk in each residence hall or by calling 615-898-2971.

c. Be familiar with Student Affairs Offices such as Counseling Services at 615-898-2670 - the staff of Counseling Services includes licensed providers – social workers, professional counselors and psychologists; the VP for Student Affairs at 615-898-2440; and Disability & Access Center (DAC) at 615-898-2783 – DAC houses the Adaptive Technology Center (ATC). The ATC staff coaches students on the use of software and other appropriate technological learning solutions depending on the needs of the students. Some resources can be checked out including tools for note taking and recording lectures. The mission of the ATC involves teaching students how to study more effectively and be successful in college.

4. Discuss plans in case of a medical emergency
   a. Teach your student basic guidelines/questions for ruling out an emergency such as, Are you able to breathe? Are you conscious? Not bleeding profusely?
      i. If it is not an emergency, go to the Student Health Services clinic prior to 4:00 pm or to a local Murfreesboro walk-in clinic after 4:00 pm. Remind them of costs associated with unnecessary trips to the emergency room
      ii. If it is an emergency, remind students to dial 911 and/or go directly to the emergency room
   b. In lieu of “mom’s magic hand” which mysteriously discerns a fever when placed on the forehead, send along with your student a first aid kit (available through Student Health Services, 898-2988) and teach your student to use a thermometer, aspirin, Tylenol or ibuprofen, and Tums.
   c. Be sure your student has a duplicate copy of their health insurance card.
   d. Teach your student to recognize the concept of body, mind, and spirit. Refer to online screenings and counseling support for help with possible depression, anxiety, addictions, and eating disorders, etc. (www.mtsu.edu/~countest) before they miss three weeks of classes. www.Transitionyear.org is an excellent resource and planning tool.
   e. After hours healthcare and information is available by calling 615-898-2988 (after 4pm). This number will connect students to a trained health assistance service, where they may seek the advice of an experienced nurse who will help them to figure out the best course of action to take with regard to a health concern or in an emergency situation.

5. Safety Issues and Resources
   a. Help the student to learn to always lock car doors, room doors, and apartment doors. Students should lock the door and carry the key even for something as quick as a trip to the residence hall bathroom. Most crimes are “crimes of opportunity.” Students should learn to use peepholes to identify visitors. Students must NEVER prop open doors to residence halls, even on their own wing or floor.
   b. The Violence Against Women Act includes the Campus SaVE Act which mandates steps institutions will take to assist victims of sexual aggression and harassment. The MTSU Sex Discrimination, Harassment, & Assault - Title IX
website (mtsu.edu/titleix/) and the MTSU Sexual Violence website (http://www.mtsu.edu/sexual-violence/) include information and steps for students who are victims of forcible and non-forcible sex offenses and aggravated assault, including domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking to seek information about the options for victims to report, or not to, as well as how to notify and seek assistance from law enforcement and campus authorities. Victims' rights and institutional responsibilities regarding judicial no-contact, restraining and protective orders are described as well.

c. **Talk to your student about making responsible choices and decisions when it comes to sexual activity.** Make sure they understand the meaning of consent and talk about bystander intervention.

d. Be sure to obtain rental insurance, or confirm that your homeowner’s policy will provide coverage. Neither on campus housing nor local apartment complexes will cover your student’s computer, DVD player, or personal property if it is damaged or stolen.

e. Tell your students repeatedly, “Please, do not walk alone after dark. Stay in a group, in well lit areas and use campus escort services.” *(Campus police 898-2424)*

f. Encourage students to sign up for Alert4You messages (http://www.mtsu.edu/alert4u/index.php) and utilize the Rave Guardian app (http://police.mtsu.edu/guardian.php)

g. Teach students that there is a ZERO tolerance policy on campus for drug use or the possession of drug paraphernalia. If a student is found responsible for use or possession of drugs in the residence halls, they will be removed immediately and you will be left to pay for the empty room as well as their new apartment.

h. MTSU is a dry campus and alcohol is not permitted. Have a talk with your student about alcohol use and abuse. Remind them of the law, and penalties for breaking the law. If your student chooses to use alcohol, teach them to be informed and responsible. Quick facts from The CORE Drug and Alcohol Survey- A Snapshot of MTSU Students (2011-2012):

- 71% of students believed their friends would disapprove if they smoked marijuana regularly
- 65% of students have not used marijuana within the last year
- 60% of students have 1 or fewer drinks in an average week
- 21% of students have not used alcohol within the last year

Talk about designated drivers and the need to keep one’s drink and room key with them at all times. Talk about how body weight and gender affect their risk for alcohol poisoning. Discuss your expectations; note the correlations between the increase of violent crime and alcohol use.

6. **Roommates**

   a. Students who live on campus or at home do better academically than students who live off-campus or not at home. Consider first year living accommodations wisely.

   b. Explain to your student that sharing a room is different than living in a room by him/herself at home with the family.
c. Explain minimal socially accepted levels of hygiene, the difference between being assertive and aggressive, as well the differences between being passive aggressive, being a doormat and being tolerant.
d. Read a book on conflict management skills together.
e. If all else fails, refer students living on campus to housing staff. Students may move to another room as many times as they want, provided a room is available. Other options on campus include mediation at no charge through Judicial Affairs at 615-898-2750.

7. Congratulations! Now you can get your life back while your student is moving on with his or hers!
   a. It’s a big transition for you too, so be gentle on yourself. Trust yourself and your student.
   b. At the same time you are encouraging your student to join a club and get involved with campus, you should be doing the same! Join a local community organization, go out with your friends, have fun.
   c. If you need some support, consider counseling for yourself or the family.
MTSU Statement of Community Standards and Expectations

MTSU is committed to developing and nurturing a community devoted to learning, growth and service. Each person who joins or affiliates with the community does so freely and accepts and practices the following core values and expectations:

**Honesty and Integrity.** The notions of personal and academic honesty and integrity are central to the existence of the MTSU community. All members of the community will strive to achieve and maintain the highest standards of academic achievement in the classroom and personal and social responsibility on- and off-campus.

**Respect for Diversity.** The MTSU community is composed of individuals representing different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, cultures, and ways of thinking. We respect individual differences and unique perspectives and acknowledge our commonalities.

**Engagement in the Community.** All members of the community are encouraged to participate in educationally purposeful activities that support and enhance the MTSU experience. Active involvement and personal investment in the classroom and throughout the community are hallmarks of an engaged citizen.

**Commitment to Nonviolence.** MTSU is committed to the principles of nonviolence and peaceful conflict resolution. Community members will freely express their ideas and resolve differences using reason and persuasion.
MTSU Counseling Services offers limited (short-term) mental health services. With this in mind, it is important that you plan ahead for appropriate care for any student coming to college with a previously diagnosed psychological condition(s). You’ll want to work with your doctor at home to make a referral to a service provider in the Murfreesboro/Nashville area and to arrange appointments prior to your student coming to campus.

If a student has been in psychiatric treatment prior to arriving at MTSU, and especially if s/he is on medication for a mental disorder, the transition to college life offers some extra challenges. Things change upon arrival at college. Sometimes students forget to take their medications. Sometimes they change their eating and sleeping habits and this can affect how well the medication works. Often times the stress of the changes and new living arrangements will cause anxiety. This guide is designed to help students who are on medications for mental disorders and their families make the transition to college life smoothly and seamlessly. Here is a step-by-step guide to most effectively plan for the transition:

STEP ONE
Make an appointment with the student’s home doctor. Your student’s doctor needs to be informed that the student is beginning college and whether or not s/he will be living in a residence hall or off-campus apartment rather than with your family. Take this guide with you and let the doctor read it.

STEP TWO
MAKE PLANS
How will prescriptions be refilled? Students can fill and transfer prescriptions to the MTSU on-campus pharmacy during regular business hours or by calling 615-494-8888. Cash and credit card payments are accepted, or charges can be placed on the student’s university account. Additionally, remember to check with local pharmacies in Murfreesboro to determine their daily and weekend hours of operation. Families need to arrange necessary student insurance cards and information and make sure the student has a way to pay for the medications.

How will necessary lab work be completed? Some students will need to have periodic lab tests done to measure blood levels. MTSU’s Health Services has an onsite laboratory that performs routine screenings and some tests at a minimal cost. Additionally, you may ask the student’s doctor for a written order for the necessary lab work and deliver this order to an appropriate
local lab in the city of Murfreesboro. You can request that the lab send a copy of the report to your home doctor or to MTSU Health Services.

STEP THREE
HELP YOUR STUDENT PREPARE TO MANAGE THEIR CONDITION MORE INDEPENDENTLY

How should medications be stored? Help your student plan to keep medication in the same place everyday; for instance the top drawer of the dresser. If it is lost, contact the doctor immediately. Ask if she or he would be willing to call in a refill prescription to your drug store. Have the phone number of the drug store available when you call.

What if my son/daughter experiences emotional or psychological deterioration while at school?
If you can tell that your student is starting to feel less well, ask your student to come to the MTSU Counseling Services office in 326S Keathley University Center, so we can make an assessment (8:00 am – 4:30 pm). If you are still using the services of a doctor at home, we will try to contact that doctor for direction.

Mental health emergencies
In the evenings and on weekends, the local county mental health center offers crisis management services. These services can be accessed by phone 24 hours a day. It is not necessary to contact our office first. Call directly, or ask your student to call directly to the following number: Rutherford County Mobile Crisis Team at 1-800-704-2651 (24 hour crisis management).

This same phone number can be called if you student is considered harmful to self or others.
CAMPUS SAFETY AT MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Middle Tennessee State University is the home of more than 24,000 students and more than 800 faculty and staff. As a community, we work hard to create a safe and supportive environment for study, teaching, research, learning, and recreation. Our success depends on each individual taking appropriate precautions and participating fully in the safety measures available.

Safety for the campus is considered to be a \textit{partnership, requiring the participation and support of students, faculty, staff, and family members}. Resources are available to address distressed, disruptive, or dangerous persons on the campus, but activation of those resources depends on community members alerting responsible authorities when they observe a potentially disruptive or dangerous situation. \textit{This means students must tell faculty, the campus police, or other staff if they are aware of a situation that causes them concern for their own safety or the safety of others.}

\textbf{MTSU Public Safety ARE TRAINED TO TAKE THE LEAD}

MTSU Public Safety is composed of 30 officers who have been trained to respond to a wide range of emergencies. In addition, the Murfreesboro City Police will assist MTSU Public Safety with manpower and equipment in a crisis situation.

\textbf{MTSU Public Safety EXPECT STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF TO:}

- Be watchful and aware of the environment and of one another. Call the police to report suspicious behavior.
- Respond immediately to official notices, requests, commands and alarms.
- In a crisis situation, remain as calm as possible.
- In a situation of violence, fire, chemical hazard, or severe weather, follow instructions for moving to a safe location. Use good judgment.
- In a situation involving a nearby or immediate threat, hide in place or, if possible, move to another location. Use good judgment.
- When the opportunity is available, call the police.

\textbf{To reach Public Safety on a campus phone, call 9-1-1 or 2424.}
On your \textbf{cell phone}, call 615-898-2424.
If you call 9-1-1 on your cell phone, you will reach the City Police and then be routed to MTSU Public Safety Dispatch. This will create additional delay in connecting you to the appropriate authorities.

\textbf{IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS:}

MTSU Public Safety: 615-898-2424
MTSU Housing/Residential Life: 615-898-2971
MTSU Counseling Services: 615-898-2670
MTSU Student Affairs: 615-898-2440
MTSU News and Public Affairs: 615-898-2919
*When dialing any of the above numbers from a campus phone, it is only necessary to dial the last 4 digits of the number.*
MTSU is serious about safety on campus

- Police force of 30 officers and growing
- Student escort service may be requested to accompany students walking on campus
- Nearly 100 video cameras on campus that capture images for later review and identification of perpetrators
- Adopt-A-Cop program, with a police officer assigned to each residence hall
- Police bicycle patrol
- Comprehensive Campus Emergency Operations Plan
- Full-time environmental health & safety inspector
- Active and ongoing Environmental Health & Safety Committee
- RAD (Rape Aggression Self Defense) Program
- Campus-wide initiative to educate and train our students on conflict resolution and mediation.

MTSU focuses on working with students to create a safe living environment

Housing and Residential Life staff members work in partnership with students living in on-campus apartments and residence halls to effectively manage security and communication within these communities. Security and emergency systems in place include the following:

- Front-desk services to assist with information, security, and communication.
- Cameras that monitor many community areas, including elevators, laundry rooms, and computer labs. On-going surveillance is not provided, but the cameras capture images for later review and identification of perpetrators.
- Resident Assistants are on duty every weekday evening and throughout each weekend. Housing and Residential Life supervisors and department heads are reachable by pager after hours.
- Housing and Residential Life staff work closely with Counseling Services to support and assist students dealing with mental health issues.

MTSU is already prepared to:

- Broadcast an emergency e-mail message to all students, faculty, and staff through a global text-messaging system.
- Simultaneously send a message to all University voice mailboxes.
- Post a proactive message on the University Web site — www.mtsu.edu
- Broadcast a message over the public address systems in all University Public Safety vehicles.
- Sound the alarm through a campus-wide tornado and emergency warning system.
- Provide faculty and staff training modules that address working and dealing with disruptive, disturbed, or dangerous students.

For additional information regarding emergency responses, please visit MTSU Alert4U at:
www.mtsu.edu/alert4u/
TOP TEN WARNING SIGNS THAT YOUR STUDENT MAY BE HAVING A HARD TIME ADJUSTING TO COLLEGE LIFE

1. *Isolation.* It is not healthy to be uninvolved with others and campus activities. Isolation can breed negative thoughts and feelings and is often an indication of anxiety and depression.

2. *Irritability.* Feeling angry or antagonistic toward others can be a sign of many different types of issues. When ignored, such feelings can escalate into many other problems.

3. *Poor class attendance.* Attendance in class ought to be a top priority for students. When it is not, it is often due to other concerns such as those listed here.

4. *Too much partying.* Excessive alcohol and drug use can pervade a student’s life and interfere with personal and academic goals.

5. *Going home every weekend.* The college years are a time to develop independence and autonomy. This cannot be accomplished when a student never really leaves home emotionally, which in turn limits relationship development. **College success is directly proportional to the amount of time a student actually physically spends on campus.**

6. *Sleeping and eating poorly.* When physiological processes such as sleep and appetite are disrupted, these are signs of underlying medical or emotional problems. Also, one cannot function well as a student when the body is not appropriately nurtured.

7. *Stress.* While some stress is inevitable, prolonged periods of high stress resulting from any of the items in this list are serious warning signs. It means that, sooner or later, the body and the student’s emotional resiliency will begin to break down.

8. *Poor communication skills.* Lack of assertiveness or aggressiveness in communication with others will nearly always produce other problems and interfere with many aspects of college life.

9. *Relationship problems.* All people experience tension and conflicts in relationships. When most or all relationships are filled with such things it affects other areas of life and can produce anxiety and depression.

10. *Poor concentration.* Academic life requires students to focus and concentrate. Students who find this difficult because of distractions are likely to experience problems in adjustment to the demands placed upon them.
As college students arrive on campus this fall, it’s a time of new experiences, new friendships, and making memories that will last a lifetime. Unfortunately for some, it is also a time of excessive drinking and dealing with its aftermath- vandalism, violence, sexual aggression, and even death.

According to research summarized in a College Task Force report to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), the consequences of excessive drinking by college students are more significant, more destructive, and more costly than many parents realize. These consequences affect students whether or not they drink.

The Good News
In spite of the stereotypes, research repeatedly shows that most college students make responsible choices when it comes to alcohol. Surveys done at MTSU in the 2011-2012 academic year* show that **64% of our students consume alcohol less frequently than once a week or not at all.**

Parental involvement can help our incoming students feel comfortable to make responsible choices, as well.

Early Weeks are Critical
As the fall semester begins, parents can use this important time to help prepare their college-age sons and daughters by talking with them about the consequences of excessive drinking.

During their high school years, those on a college-prep track tend to drink less than their non-college bound classmates. However, during subsequent years, heavy drinking rates of college students surpass those of their non-college peers. This rapid increase in heavy drinking over a relatively short period of time can contribute to serious difficulties with the transition to college.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the first six weeks of the first semester are critical to a first-year student’s academic success. Because some students initiate heavy drinking during these early days of college, the potential exists for excessive alcohol consumption to interfere with successful adaptation to campus life.

Parents Can Help
During these crucial early weeks, parents can do a variety of things to stay involved:

- Pay special attention to your son’s or daughter’s experiences and activities during the first six weeks on campus.
- Call your son or daughter frequently during the first six weeks of college.
- Inquire about their roommates, the roommates’ behavior, and how disagreements are settled.
- Make sure that your son or daughter understands the penalties for underage drinking, public drunkenness, using a fake ID, driving under the influence, assault, and other alcohol-related offenses.
- Make certain that they understand how alcohol use can lead to sexual assault, violence, and academic failure.
- Be aware of the signs of possible alcohol abuse by your son or daughter (e.g., lower grades, never available or reluctant to talk with you, unwilling to talk about activities with friends, trouble with campus authorities, serious mood changes).
- Visit your son or daughter. Ask to meet their friends. Attend Family Weekend and other campus events open to parents.
- Continue to stay actively involved in the life of your son or daughter. Even though they may be away at college, they continue to be an extension of your family and its values.

For more information, visit the NIAAA’s award-winning website: www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov

*Statistics are from the CORE Drug and Alcohol Survey, administered anonymously in the 2011-2012 academic year to 1,155 MTSU students. Information adapted from National Institute of Health’s publications No. 07-5640, Aug. 2007, and No. 02-5015, April 2002.